1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

Harvesting Olives in Southern Greece

During my travels in Greece I have passed countless olive trees, for they hug the coasts, crowd the islands, and thrive inland where the climate is mild enough. But I never really understood the significance of the olive tree until I visited an estate in Southern Greece where three thousand trees of about seven varieties provided the only income.

I had already learned that over 12 percent of the caloric intake of the Greek people came from olives or olive oil; that Greece produced in 1948–1950 an annual average of 47,000 metric tons of table olives, chiefly in Thessaly and Central Greece; that the smaller oil olives, grown elsewhere in the country, accounted for 103,000 metric tons annually of this precious oil, which was bought and stored as a financial reserve whenever the currency became the least bit shaky. The oil olives also produced another 12,000 tons of residue oil. Friends had said that olive growing was a story of "from rags to riches," since one year might bring an outstanding crop and the next a disastrously poor one,* but that this was one of the accepted features of growing olives.

Some inquiring students think the olive was in Greece before the goddess Athena, with whom it is so closely associated in myth, and was originally associated with the cult of Erechtheus. Be that as it may, the olive — the "All-Dewy One" — has held a special place in the tradition of the Greek people. They have also come to know that olive growing is much more than storytelling or the writing of descriptive poetry; it is hard work. In Thessaly, around the Gulf of Volos, it was interesting to watch men plow underneath the trees and fertilize the soil to increase the olive crop; to see on the western coast of Greece and in the Peloponnesos how the peasants irrigated the fifteen to twenty trees that each might own, thereby adding to the quality and the size of the fruit. In Attica one could watch the men expertly trimming the tree so that it would bunch as it grew, making harvesting a simpler task. In the Ionian Islands, where the air is humid and growth more lush, the trees reached much higher, causing the people there to wait for the olives to fall after ripening rather than pick them directly from the tree. "A lazy man's way," said a mainland peasant.

Like many things of importance, the olive harvest has a slow beginning. In October, walking through the olive groves of this estate, one could see the table varieties beginning to ripen. The Kalamata olive was one. At first, the few workers on the estate gather the olives falling to the ground, but within a week's time they begin to gather some from the trees. It is then that the girls from the surrounding villages make their gay appearance. Not many are married, for this would show that their husbands were

* Compared to the 1959–60 figure of 136,000 tons of oil, 1960–61 showed 75,000 tons.

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My master bought me, undressed me, cut off my head, and then as he was chopping me he felt sorry and started crying. (An onion.)

Food and Clothing

Since fuel is so scarce throughout most of the country, fire is used for cooking only when absolutely necessary. Many families still do their cooking in the open fireplace, but many more use small sheet-metal stoves. The husband, when he has caught up on his other jobs, brings the fuel to the house by donkey from the village forest or from some mountainside where the holm-oak shrubs grow, but the wife may also help in this task from time to time.

If she can, the wife persuades her husband to build a brick and mud stove, which raises the cooking surface high enough to avoid stooping. In fact, a good indication of progress in a Greek village home is the height of the stove. Only a few kettles or pans exist where the fireplace is used for cooking, but metal casseroles are required for modern stoves with ovens. Even in those homes where cooking arrangements border on the primitive, a meal is served on clean, white tablecloths, with napkins and whatever dishes and cutlery the family can afford.

The food varies considerably by geographical region and by season. But everywhere one finds, in the words of Dorothy Lee, that "traditionally, food is not nutrition. Food is good, not good for you." [1] Therefore, when we describe the Greek diet as consisting of 2477 calories per day as compared with the United States figure of 3129, we are talking nutrition, not food. Or when we break these calories down according to their sources, as in Table 3, we are following a Western, not a Greek villager's, approach. No-

TABLE 3. SOURCES OF CALORIC INTAKE, GREECE AND UNITED STATES, 1948–49

Food group	Percentage of calories	
	Greece	United States
Cereals	61	25
Potatoes	2	3
Sugar and honey	4	15
Pulses and nuts	6	3
Vegetables and fruits	5	6
Meat, fish, and eggs	3	19
Dairy products	4	14
Oils and fats	15	15
	100	100

Source: Adapted from Leland G. Allbaugh, *Crete: A Case Study of an Underdeveloped Area* (Princeton, 1953), p. 132.

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tice in particular the heavy concentration on cereals in the Greek diet in comparison with the more even distribution among other food groups in the American diet. The small proportion obtained from dairy products brings to mind a conversation with an official from Northern Greece, who noted that in a village near Kozane the cows were "about the size of goats," so small and unproductive were they. He told his secretary to arrange to have a good bull sent to the village to improve the stock and to announce to the people what he was about to do. But the women asked why.

"To give you bigger animals to work and to give you more milk."

"What will we do with the milk?"

"Drink it."

"Whoever heard of drinking cow's milk?"

There was no objection, of course, to drinking goat's or sheep's milk. This official went back to the director of agriculture for his region and said, "You hang a stone around your neck, and I'll hang one around mine. We've been here this long and haven't yet taught the people that they can drink cow's milk."

Thus food is more than a statistical table. We learn what is locally important when we hear a Greek village girl tell about the kind of food she has at home:

> Throughout the year we eat bread, which is coarse, a little darker, and tastes much better than the bread in Athens. It is made of wheat flour from the grain grown by each family and milled in one of the seven watermills near the village. As a milling charge the miller will keep about one sixth. The flour is stored in a wooden box at home. When we make bread we mix the dough in a pottery bowl. At first, we may need to borrow or buy yeast from another family but then keep a little yeast for next time. We bake once a week in an outdoor oven; in the winter, if the weather is very bad, we use a little oven in the house. The outdoor oven is made of brick and is round. After we have built a fire from branches and gotten the oven very hot, we push the coals to the side and put the round loaves in between so that they will absorb the heat from the oven and the coals. We may also cook cakes or sweets in the oven.
>
> Our people want bread all of the time when they are eating. We eat cornbread only in case of emergency. We eat potatoes more than rice, usually serving the potatoes in a stew of meat and red sauce.
>
> We eat much [notice her definition of "much"] meat, especially pork because we feed a pig until it reaches a hundred okas; we kill it, cut it up, and put the meat in receptacles after salting it. The pig is butchered around March and its meat lasts us for about a year, if we use some of it about twice a week. We eat more chicken than lamb; we don't use beef.
>
> We eat a bean stew about three times a week except in the summer, at which time we eat green beans. We eat many vegetables and fruits in season. We dry figs for use during the year.
>
> The daughter-in-law does most of the cooking and is apt to favor her father-in-law's appetite.

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262 [432] in-law's appetite. Our people don't spend much money on food, preferring to grow their own. If a person buys food at the market the others will become envious of him because he has money "to spend on food."

264 Meal times are as follows when we are doing field work: breakfast, 6 to 7 A.M. at which time we eat bread, cheese, olives, and sometimes eggs; at 10 A.M. there is a break for a snack; lunch is at 1 P.M. and supper about 8:30 P.M.

272 We drink tea every day, this being what we call "mountain tea" [*tsai tou vounou*], made from a wild flower which we gather.

262 [146] Most of the oils and fats the Greeks use, come from olives rather than from animal products. Indeed, of the proteins eaten by Greeks, including the city as well as the rural Greek, only 19 percent is animal protein in comparison with 66 percent in the United States. As one study observed:

[235] [855] The majority of families in the villages have from 4 to 8 hens, each of which lays about 60 eggs per year. Eggs are used for feeding children up to the age of 4. Adults get few eggs except at Easter and on feast days. . . . A majority of the people have very little cheese. This is particularly serious since consumption of meat is so low.[6]

262 264 In traveling over Greece, a foreign observer is struck by a number of interesting and useful practices connected with food. The widespread use of one-dish meals, most of them vegetable stews, economizes fuel and cooking equipment and frees the women for other household and farm tasks. Bread can be dipped into the stew sauce, serving a purpose quite apart from its food value. Many families cook only one hot meal a day, starting off with a cold breakfast except in the winter when they have a warm porridge. 251 Even though the climate during much of the year is warm, there is no home refrigeration, very little canning of vegetables or fruits, but considerable drying, brining, and pickling in order to conserve food for use when it is out of season. Eggs, however, can be stored for several months in water glass.

262 [574] [146] Various holidays have their traditional dishes, providing a festive occasion at which the Greek villager really gets enough to eat; at other times, he leaves the table hungry. A daily average of about 2500 calories per person for the whole country is no fattening diet, although more healthful than one in which individuals consistently overeat.

262 184 [146] Regional variations in food habits throughout Greece depend upon the local products available. Where the olive is not grown, but is obtained only through purchase or barter, the peasant usually has milk products such as cheese or yoghurt. Where citrus fruit is lacking, more red peppers in the bean stews provide vitamins. Within a community there are also differences in diet based on differences in income.

252 572 184 Villages differ also in the day customarily set aside for baking bread in the outdoor ovens. In a village such as Malakassa in Attica the women bake on

/63 cont./

Unfortunately the women lack even the simplest /64/ knowledge in nutrition and always prepare an unbalanced diet, although available food stuffs are enough to prepare a balanced diet. Thus the diet is poor. The local doctor always mentioned the fact that medicines will not cure the disease unless the people have a diet suitable to their work and conditions. 146

The question is not how to teach them a balanced diet and nutrition but how to use advantageously the existing food materials and to study the economic conditions so as to ascertain a feasible program for balancing their diet. It was one of the mistakes of the home demonstration center which started teaching them science and nutrition, instead of trying to find out what they had and how they were using it so as to improve their methods of utilizing it better. [654]

PART V. HEALTH.

Home Remedies. The people of Megali Vrisi can never forget what they learned from their parents regardless of education and new environment. Both the doctor and the local nurse would advise the women how to take care of the sick, but still one would find them trying their own methods before attempting the doctors or the nurses. Through experience the farmers found certain plants that have definite results for every disease and /65/ sickness. For a cold they drink boiled camomile. For stomach troubles they boil the roots of a plant and drink the juice. For boils they put on boiled onion, boiled linseed and fresh cow manure. 757 178

Regardless of whether they have the nurse and the doctor in their village, in case of sickness they will consult first the experienced neighbor and as a last resort they will consult the nurse or the doctor. [759]

264 titbits, additional dishes, or special table arrangements. It is an
594 occasion not to be treated lightly. Everyone down to the smallest child is present, and sits at the table throughout the meal. Everyone crosses himself at the beginning and the end of the meal. A blessing is called upon the meal, and absent members are remembered at this time. To quarrel at the table would be like "quarrelling in Church". Food is one aspect of this total situation, but it is not the entire end of the meal; and dinner is much more than food. Breakfast is not a meal but a light snack for individuals. The true family meal comes after
[461] one's day's "work" is over. Where people work until 2 p.m. and then
[369] stop for the day, as in offices in Athens, there may be two family meals a day; but the family meal is usually the evening meal.

264 The meal is the supreme medium of hospitality. All hospitality
594 involves the offer of some food—a spoonful of preserves, coffee, brandy, nuts, fresh fruit, according to locality and time of the year. The meal goes beyond this. Visitors helping to re-establish refugees in their devastated villages report that the peasants kill their only hen for them, and fill their pockets with the few nuts they have. To invite a friend to dinner and take him to a restaurant is an insult, even in Athens. Restaurants are for foreigners and those who ape their ways, and for those unfortunate travellers who have no relatives in the city. There are also eating places known as kitchens, where men who work too far from home can get a home-like meal. A group of friends on an outing or out for a dance may also eat together, incidentally, but this is a different matter.

146 Traditionally, food is not nutrition. Food is good, not good for
261 you. In the cities there are at times articles published on nutrition.
855 The mothers read maternal and child care manuals which mention and describe nutrition, and perhaps they read the book by Dr. Katsigra on Food and Life, which tells them that all Greek food recipes destroy food values and transform the food into poison. Very few other Greeks are aware of these writings, or mention such
[369] things in conversation, however. In the cities where mothers have been taught to stress nutritional values, to feed their children by schedule, and to keep them from the social communion of the family meal, feeding problems are well-known; in the villages such problems are not reported. Children there are not urged to eat, and are not tempted with special foods: "Why should children not want to eat? Isn't food good?" If they do not like the eggplant dish particularly, there is always bread, and no one has ever heard of a child who does not like bread.

262 Greek meals are traditionally simple. There is always bread, and
264 every mouthful of food must be eaten with a bite of bread. Greeks at foreign tables find it very difficult to face food, even potatoes and spaghetti, without the traditional mouthful of bread; apart from distaste, there is a feeling of guilt at eating food without bread. In the